Nov. 1988(?)

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY - Founded December 17, 1857

WASHTENAW IMPRESSIONS

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS DUE: NOTE CHANGE

WCHS membership dues letters will be going out before the end of the year when membership expires. Don't forget to renew to keep on receiving *The Impressions* and notices of WCHS programs. We need your support.

You may also join by sending name, address and phone number with check or money order payable to Washtenaw County Historical Society to WCHS Membership, 312 South Division Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48104-2204. Information: 996-3008. (Please note change of address and phone number to Kempf House.)

Annual dues are $10 for individuals, $18 a couple. Senior individual (60) dues are $8, senior couple, $14. Sustaining dues are $50, commercial $25 and student, $5. Only one of a couple need be 60 to qualify as seniors.

LOCAL GROUP'S FOCUS ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

WCHS member Rochelle (Ricky) Balkam has called our attention to the Saarinen (Michigan) Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians headquartered in Ypsilanti and its newsletter, *Kiosk.* The chapter will celebrate its tenth anniversary in fall 1989.

The chapter was to hold a daylong meeting Saturday, November 12, in Monroe and plans a meeting in Muskegon in the spring. Ms. Balkam is Preservation Representative. For more information call her at 668-6294.

CERTIFICATES OFFERED

Hand-lettered certificates are offered free of charge, framed if desired, by WCHS to organizations for milestone anniversaries. Information: 663-8826. If readers know of such anniversaries coming up, please let us know.

COUNTRY CHRISTMAS SET

Cobblestone Farm Country Christmas will be held noon-4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, December 3 and 4, at the farm, 2781 Packard Road. The house will be decorated. Musical entertainment and crafts sales.

RAMON HERNANDEZ WILL TALK ABOUT HUMOR, DRAMA, OF SIX PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURATIONS NOVEMBER 20

Ramon Hernandez, director of the Ann Arbor Public Library, who gave a dramatic talk about the May Festival to WCHS last February, will return at 2 p.m. Sunday, November 20, to discuss "Six Presidential Inaugurations: Slices of Human History."

The meeting will be at the University of Michigan's Bentley Historical Library, 1150 Beal, on North Campus near Veteran's Hospital.

He plans to tell some human interest stories behind presidential inaugurations generally but will mainly focus on the humor and drama of six including George Washington's.

A native of Chicago, he graduated from Elmhurst (Illinois) College in history, Eden Theological Seminary in St. Louis and earned a master's in library science at University of Wisconsin.

He was a United Church of Christ pastor and state director of U.C.C. youth work ten years before beginning his career as library director in Merrill, Wisconsin, in 1970. He directed the Wisconsin Rapids Public Library before coming to Ann Arbor in 1983.

The meeting is open to the public free of charge. Free parking Sundays by library and across the street. Refreshments will be served.

GSWC WILL SHARE FAMILY TRADITIONS

"Family Traditions" will be highlighted at the Genealogy Society of Washtenaw County meeting at 1:30 p.m. Sunday, December 4, in the Sunshine Room at Glacier Hills Retirement Home, 1200 Earhart Road.

Those attending are asked to bring a traditional family holiday dish to serve and a family trinket (toy, ornament, decoration) to tell about.

DECORATING OLD HOUSE FOR HOLIDAYS IS TOPIC

Marilou Warner, immediate past-president of Kempf House Association and a WCHS board member, will conduct the final old house clinic on holiday decorations at 2 p.m. Sunday, November 13, at Leslie Science Center, 1831 Traver Road. They have been sponsored by Ann Arbor Area Preservation Alliance.

CFA ELECTS SIX

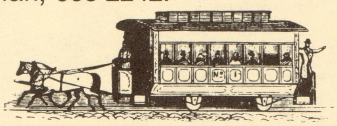
A slate of six was elected to the Cobblestone Farm Association board at the annual meeting October 11 which featured an authentic New England colonial dinner in honor of Dr. Benajah Ticknor's 200th birthday. He was the original owner.

Elected were John (Jack) W. Etsweiler, III, Mary Jo Gord, John Moga, Sandra White, Judy Gray and Lynne Wolff, the latter two to fill unexpired terms.

'WHAT IS IT' GAME AVAILABLE TO SCHOOLS

WCHS offers a traveling exhibit of small artifacts set up as a humorous "What is it" game for children to schools and another for adults.

They are available for classes and meetings, subject to time and volunteer availability. For information call Karen O'Neal, chairwoman, 665-2242.



WCHS VICE-PRESIDENT HAS SPECIAL INTEREST IN FENTON MUSEUM

WCHS Vice-President Esther Warzynski has a special interest in another historical society in Genessee County—The Pioneer Memorial Association of Fenton and Mundy Townships.

Her parents, Mr. and Mrs. William Watkins, gave the house, built in 1836 as an Indian trading post, to three men with the idea that it might be saved from destruction by interested citizens. The association was organized in 1967. The house is now a pioneer museum.

Among the association's activities are an annual spring buffalo dinner and a pioneer day in September featuring buffalo burgers.

ALL IN FUN:
"WHAT IS IT?" GAMES TEST MEMBERS' METTLE

WCHS decided this fall not to let the kids have all the fun.

Some local third and fourth graders who have played the "What is it?" game that accompanies the Society's traveling exhibit for chidren are possibly more familiar with some of the Society's artifacts than members who regularly attend meetings.

To change that, Karen O'Neal, traveling exhibit chairman, presented both children's and adult's exhibits with accompanying games at the October meeting.

There are twelve objects in the children's exhibit, 20 in the adult's. Each exhibit has a sheet of multiple choice answers, mostly plausible, a few humorous.

Players could inspect the items and circle what they thought was the best answer on their papers. Afterwords Mrs. O'Neal discussed the right answers.

She mainly presents the children's exhibits to third and fourth graders because that is when the public schools have a unit on local history. The adult exhibit is sometimes presented with the "What is it?" game, sometimes just loaned for display to schools or organizations.

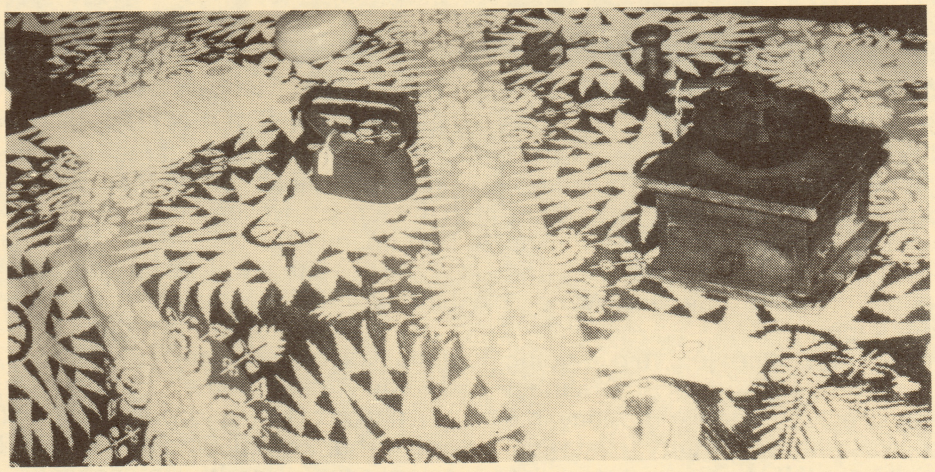
"If you know of any groups that would be interested in a limited loan that is fine because we are interested in getting the things out where people can see them," she said.

"My interest in history probably stems from my parents, my mother in particular. My mother had a museum in her basement and those things have now come into my possession as both parents have passed away.

"I have them in storage and am wondering what to do with them. Her collection ran to antique kitchen ware, gadgets, toys, miniatures and seven doll houses.

"Having grown up with all this, these things don't seem so rare or unusual to me. However, I find that children in third and fourth grade are just amazed.

"When I go to the schools, first I try to put it into context for them by asking who is the oldest person they know. I'm amazed at how many of them will say they have a grandmother who is a hundred or close.



Part of WCHS's traveling exhibit for children is shown here on a woven 1855 bed covering given the Society by the Eberbach family.

"I tell them that these things were very common 100 years ago. They are roughly that time frame, perhaps some are newer. They will often say they have this or that old thing in their house.

"I also try to get them to see 100 years from today. What would be the things from our generation that would be on display? Will it be a microwave oven and television that people 100 years from now will look at and say "what *is* that?"

HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF

The last time that we know of that WCHS had a "What is it?" program was fifty years ago at the annual meeting June 6, 1938, a picnic at Newport Beach on Portage Lake near Pinckney.

Mrs. Edith Staebler Kempf, a current member, was elected president. Twenty-seven articles "mostly from the collection" were passed around in an "identity guessing game." Miss Emma Hoffstetter won a prize for the longest correct list – 19 items.

The list of items is preserved in the secretary's minutes. The list includes bullet molds, a punch for making homemade stays, a needle for stringing dried apples and a "wheel boy," whatever that is.

"Also there is nothing new under the sun. Over the ages societies have coped with all of the things that we cope with today – food, shelter, clothing, daily life. Each society has different solutions.

These are some solutions from 100 years ago that were appropriate to their level of technology. We have other solutions now but we are really addressing the same problems.

After the audience had finished the quiz, Mrs. O'Neal went through the objects one by one.

Of the first object on the children's quiz, there was a choice of a. wintertime finger warmer, b. mold used for making candles or c. forms used to make popsicles.

It was, of course, a candle mold. "This particular one is nice because it's all strung with wicks. When you pour the wax in and it hardens, you can cut the strings off at the bottom and just lift the candle out. This also has a tamper to use to make sure you don't have air bubbles in your wax.

A plum pudding mold was not so different from those in stores today. The third item was "not a gerbil keeper, not a cash register. It is a lap desk. What do they sell at the Hallmark store today but a flat surface with a pillow on the bottom that you can use as a lap desk?"

"It's maybe not even as convenient as this because here you can keep all your pens and pencils and papers.

"Instead of being able to get in their car and turn on the electric heater, people 100 years ago needed a way to keep warm so hot coals would be scooped up from the fireplace in a pan and put inside a foot warmer and taken in the carriage.

"A lead balloon is certainly what this looks like. Other choices are 'tambourine or canteen.' Actually it looks very similar in shape to plastic canteens Boy Scouts carry today. This is metal. Water is

another basic necessity everybody has to have. This was their solution."

Lillian Brown in the audience said she has her grandfather's brass canteen from the Civil War. Elizabeth Dusseau, collections chairman, doesn't know the age of this particular canteen but says World War I soldiers had canteens like it.

Mrs. O'Neal noted that the woven bed covering on that table was one donated by the Eberbach family. In the corner is woven "Gabriel Rauscher, 1855." She used her own quilts on the other tables.

An 1871 typewriter, once owned by Michael Staebler, grandfather of member Edith Staebler Kempf, was given to the Society by her uncles Walter and Herman Staebler.

"You would move a lever, clamp down. That pushes the letter onto the roller to type. It would be strictly slide, push, slide, push—quite a tedious process but what is it but an early word processor.

"At their level of technology it was really quite a feat of engineering and mechanics and machining.

What most people figured was an old fashioned laundry iron, other careful observers guessed was a door stop because it had a puzzling pattern of small indentations on the bottom and they expected an iron to be smooth.

Many people now use old irons for door stops, Mrs. O'Neal agreed. No one could explain the indentation pattern. It was not a fluting iron.

Of the old coffee grinder, many children say their mother has a new coffee grinder at home and uses it.

An old steropticon view showed a young woman sitting at a table and a gentleman leaning in through an open window to give her a kiss.

"The children always think that this is quite something. Of course they relate to this as a View-Master slide viewer of today."

A pin cushion with sewing bird clamped on to the table and the fabric could be clamped in the bird's bill for pinning or ripping seams.

"There apparently was a children's story sometime in the '20s called 'Mary Frances's Sewing Book.' Her mother made her sit and sew every day and she hated it until one day the sewing bird came to life and showed her how to sew. Then she loved it.

"I thought it would be cute to go

It's not a punched tin hanging lantern, or a portable outdoor stove. It's a foot-warmer used in sleighs and carriages. Karen O'Neal, traveling exhibit chairman, shows it.

along with this but haven't been able to find it.

"This hair receiver is something children can't relate to although the fact that this one is made of celluloid, an early form of plastic, is of interest.

"But when I show them what people did with the saved hair, they just kind of go into shock. I show the hair wreath with all colors of human hair woven into this lovely floral effect.

"This seems to have been a fad that has passed, but in the Victorian era this was quite the home craft for the ladies, I guess. From my family I have a pin with Aunt Margaret's hair.

Miss Dusseau noted that in the 1800s they used to have mourning jewelry with locks of hair from the dearly departed. Greenfield Village has a nice collection.

The loose hair that you comb out can be tucked in the receiver on the dresser and used either for a wreath or they could make a little 'rat' out of it to pad their hair-do.

Carol Freeman said her grandmother saved her hair against the time when, as she got older and her hair thinner, she might have to have a switch made. Someone said human hair makes good stuffing for pin cushions.

The last item in the children's exhibit is a long button hook or boot hook. Mrs. O'Neal brings a pair of high button shoes to demonstrate its use.

Mrs. O'Neal continued on through the adult collection but we don't want to "give away" all the adult items. Both exhibits are available to schools and organizations by calling Mrs. O'Neal at 665-2242.

One item, however, prompted Doris Milliman, Ypsilanti city historian, to say that Ypsilanti once had a dress stay factory.

She invited those present to visit Ypsilanti Museum and see, among other things, their recently acquired buggy jack and a rope maker. They will demonstrate the latter.

Lillian and Carl Brown of Milan brought their own "What-is-it?" collection of items mounted on a board for others to see. She also brought some large old brooches to show.

Their collection included a buggy wrench to fit six sizes of nuts, a Model T car wrench or knuckle-buster, a Model T gas gauge, a bread knife, an old doorbell and door knobs from Mrs. Brown's parents home, a stone mason's tool to trim motar and split small stones and, most puzzling of all—a tool used to gash yellow pines in Georgia to gather turpentine.

REMINISCENCES OF AN EARLY WASHTENAW SETTLER: WOLVES, INDIANS IN BRIDGEWATER SCARY TO BOY

by Robert Edwin Miller

(Bob Miller, WCHS treasurer, has some early Washtenaw roots. This is the second installment of reminiscences of pioneer life in Bridgewater township by some of his antecedents, Warren Heman Mills and twin brother, Hiram Wallace Mills. Their father, John, was a brother of Bob's great-grandfather. The first installment appeared in April 1988).

"Where my father had located was called an oak opening. It was a sparsely timbered plain consisting of rich, sandy land, very productive at that time. Grass grew in great abundance all over these plains.

"Cattle could live all winter without needing food or shelter other than that furnished by the natural grass and trees. There was but little frost during the winter and the winter season itself was remarkably short with very little snow.

"The temperature never went below zero during the first ten years of our stay in Michigan. For game there was plenty of deer, wild turkeys, partridges, bear, wolves in abundance that ran in large packs, panthers, mink and beaver. The streams were full of fine fish and furred animals.

To show the number and ferocity of the wolves I (Warren) shall relate

an incident that occurred while I was about seven years old.

"The wolves always ran in packs, making the night hideous with their fiendish howling.

"One night, mother determined to visit her sick sister, Maria Burk, who lived about four miles from our house and at that time was the nearest neighbor.

"She took a gray mare we had, a very fine active animal of great speed and endurance. Mother, who was an expert horse woman, sprung into the saddle, took me up behind, and started for her sister's.

"About half way we came to what was then known as Paint Creek from the fact that the dirt adjacent to it was used to paint with—it made a paint of a red color.

"We had just crossed the creek when we were surrounded by a pack of ferocious wolves with gleaming eyes and teeth.

"Mustering all her courage, Mother whipped the mare to the top of her speed, the wolves following behind, chilling my childish heart with their fearful howling. Luckily the horse was too fleet for them and before we reached my aunt's house they had been left in the distance.

(To be continued.)

HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS INVOLVE:
DEPOT, BAZAAR, PRESIDENCY, DOOR, CHURCH, CHRISTMAS, WELCH HALL

Chelsea Historical Society: 7:30 p.m. second Monday at restored railroad depot off North Main at tracks from now on, except no meeting in December.

Dexter Society: Annual Christmas bazaar 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday, December 3 at museum, 3443 Inverness, to benefit museum. Annual tree-trimming potluck 6:30 p.m. Thursday, November 17, at museum.

Museum open 1-3 p.m. Friday, Saturday to mid-December or by appointment (426-2519). (Some WCHS items on loan. Ask to see them.) Regular meetings 7:30 p.m. first Thursday.

Manchester Society: Peter Fletcher of Ypsilanti will speak on "The American Presidency" at 7:30 p.m. Monday, November 21, at the Blacksmith Shop, 324 East Main. Christmas party to be arranged.

Milan Society: 7:30 p.m. third Wednesday at Hack House, 775 County Street.

Northfield Society: Dodge House renovation as township library and offices for historical society is expected to be completed in December. The new front door, side lights and transom donated by NTHS have been installed.

The annual meeting was to be Thursday, November 3, with a program on pros and cons of proposed incorporation of Whitmore Lake as a city and election of board members. Nominees for six seats were Patrick Kelley, Jim May, Harvey Pohnert, Marian Zwink and incumbents Beverly Bater and Glenna Santure.

Pittsfield Society: 2 p.m. first Sunday at township hall. No December meeting.

Salem Society: 7:30 p.m. Thursday, November 17, at former Congregational Church, 7961 Dickerson Street. Steve Roberts will talk about the history of Salem Bible Church. Annual wassail Christmas party tentatively planned Sunday, December 18.

Webster Society: Christmas music, slides and readings by May Mast, 7:45 p.m. Monday, December 5, at home of Dennis and Linda Oberto, 7315 North Jennings Road. Those attending are asked to bring a wrapped toy, labeled for gender and age of child, to be donated to Family Services.

Beginning with annual meeting in January, meeting will be the second Monday at 7:45 p.m., location to be announced, instead of first Monday. November 7 meeting was a demonstration of graining and marbleizing wood by Kathy Cooper Friesen.

Ypsilanti Society: Dr. Andrew Narizzo will talk about the restoration of Eastern Michigan University's oldest building, Welch Hall, at the annual dinner at 5 p.m. Sunday, November 13, at new Masonic Temple on Whittaker Road. For reserved tickets, $7 each, call museum, mornings, 482-4990.

Christmas open house 2-5 p.m. Sunday, December 11, at museum, 220 North Huron, also 7-9 p.m. Friday, December 9, in addition to regular hours 2-4 p.m. Friday-Sunday.

The gift shop, featuring a variety of items including pottery, linens and Gwen Frostic notepaper, will also be open 10 a.m.-noon December 7-9.

KEMPF HOUSE SETS CAROLING, OPEN HOUSE

Christmas at Kempf House will feature a caroling party Friday evening December 2 and open house the afternoons of December 3, 4, 10 and 11. Groups interested in hearing about the recent refurbishing may arrange a meeting there. Information: 996-3008.

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WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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